

Health Promotion Resource Guide

Weight Management Programs: Lessons Learned



We need some words up here that say: here's what has worked at successful WMPs at various Army installations.

WMP specifics – Soldiers

One successful Army program for Soldiers takes 15 participants. The program begins with a three full days of intensive classes and one-on-one counseling. Then participants meet three times per week for six weeks for supervised exercise sessions and individual counseling. Participant weights are recorded weekly at the gym by a fitness instructor.

- Outcomes data on body composition, fitness, and knowledge are collected at the end of the six-week program and again at four months after program completion.
- Whereas this program has achieved good results for those who complete the program, the dropout rate is 25% due to high time demands for program participation.
- FY05 outcomes (at the end of the six-week program): average weight loss = 6.1 lbs; average body fat decrease = 2.8%; percentage of participants released from the Army Weight Control Program = 63%; percentage of participants increasing their APFT score by at least 10% = 73%.

WMP specifics - beneficiaries

One successful Army program for beneficiaries takes 25 participants and meets as a group twice a week for five weeks. Day and evening programs run concurrently.

- Follow-up is conducted at 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-months after program completion.
- Outcomes collected include weight, lab work, BMI, and waist girth.
- Follow-up information becomes more difficult to obtain as time goes on.

HELPFUL HINT: Emphasize that the WMP is about **positive lifestyle changes**.

The WMP should **not** be a “diet” program.

Army WMPs with proven success cover these topics:

- Basic nutrition
- Eating healthy when dining out
- Supermarket shopping and label reading
- Meal planning and portion sizes
- Dietary supplements
- Planning an exercise program and using gym resources effectively
- Emotional and stress eating

Other lessons learned

- Allowing the spouse or another family member to attend the class with the participant increases chances for success.
- Actual meal preparation (while popular with participants) is labor-intensive: shopping, storing ingredients, completing purchasing paperwork, clean-up, etc.
 - Another option: consider asking participants to bring a bagged lunch or dinner and “Eat with the Dietitian.”
- “Classroom” teaching must be combined with hands-on, practical exercise to give participants practice using new skills.
- Because Soldiers and their families move frequently, keep your WMP as visible as possible.